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August 1988

Volume 1  
Number 2

## NEBRASKA 1986 POPULATION ESTIMATES

by Jerome A. Deichert  
and Tim K. Himberger

As of July 1, 1986, Nebraska's population was 1,598,000, according to a U.S. Census Bureau provisional estimate. Between 1980 and 1986, the state's population grew by about 28,000 persons. This represents an increase of 1.8 percent since the 1980 census and an increase of 7.6 percent since the 1970 census.

Population change consists of natural increase and net migration. Natural increase is the difference between births and deaths. During the 1980-86 period, births exceeded deaths in Nebraska by 74,000. Net migration (which explains why natural increase and actual increase are not the same) is the difference between people moving into and out of an area. Net migration for the state showed a loss of 46,000 persons between 1980 and 1986 (2.9 percent).

The July 1986 population estimates for Nebraska and its counties were reviewed with special emphasis on changing net migration rates. The data used in this report were obtained from a computer tape file, "1986 Population Estimates by County and Components of Change," prepared by the U. S. Bureau of the Census. It contains provisional population estimates for July 1, 1986, and the corrected 1980 census population figure for each state and county in the United States. In addition, figures are shown for births, deaths, and residual migration during the 1980-86 period.

Table 1 shows the components of Nebraska's population change since 1950. A steady increase in population from 1950 to 1980 masked sizable changes in the underlying components. Both net outmigration and natural increase declined steadily between 1950 and

1980. However, since 1980, net outmigration increased considerably and may match 1960's levels. Also, because births will not make up the difference in population, Nebraska may finish the decade with one of the lowest rates of growth in more than 40 years.

During the 1970s, outmigration rates declined considerably. Many counties recorded gains in population through net immigration--a turnaround from decades of population loss due to

Table 1  
Nebraska's Population with  
Components of Change, 1960-86

Component of Change	Year				
	1960	1970	1980	1986	1990*
Total population (thousands)	1,411	1,485	1,570	1,598	1,617
Change in population (thousands)	85	74	85	28	47
Change in population (percent)	6.5	5.2	5.7	1.8	3.0
Natural increase (thousands)	202	147	97	74	122
Net migration (thousands)	-117	-73	-13	-46	-75
Net migration rate (percent)	-8.3	-4.9	-0.8	-2.9	-4.8

\*Estimate based on change between 1980 and 1986.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *1986 Population Estimates by County and Components of Change* and Lynn Nejezchle, *Migration Trends and Patterns in Nebraska*, Bureau of Business Research, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, June 1981. Calculations by CAUR.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jerry Deichert is a senior research associate at CAUR and a member of the governor's Economic Forecasting Advisory Board. His interest in economic and demographic issues in Nebraska has resulted in numerous published articles.

Tim K. Himberger is CAUR's database coordinator. Tim's special interests include economic development and economic projections and forecasting.



outmigration. Since 1980, however, the loss of Nebraskans due to outmigration has increased, and, with continued stress on the state's economy, it is expected to continue.

County Population

Although Nebraska's total population grew steadily from 1960 to 1986, table 2 shows that only 20 counties increased in population between 1980 and 1986. While the population in 11 counties declined 1 percent or less during

the 6-year period, 23 of the remaining counties showed a decline in population that was more than 5 percent.

Table 2 and figure 1 show that most of the state's population growth took place in the eastern and southeastern counties. However, some northwestern counties showed an increase. Banner County led the state with a 13.5 percent expansion. The counties with increasing population were generally among the state's largest. Of the 20 counties with increased population, 12 were in the state's

Table 2  
Changes in Population and Net Migration Rates in Nebraska Counties, 1960-86

Area	Estimate		Change in population 1980-86	Net migration rate 1980-86	Expected change 1980-1990		Net migration rate 1970-80	Net migration rate 1960-70	1980-86 migration rates compared to	
	July 1, 1986	April 1, 1980			Population	Migration			1970-80	1960-70
	No.	No.	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Nebraska	1,598,000	1,569,825	1.8	-2.9	3.0	-4.8	-0.8	-4.8		
Adams	30,900	30,656	0.8	-1.9	1.3	-3.1	-2.8	-1.0	-	-
Antelope	8,400	8,675	-2.8	-7.2	-4.6	-11.7	-7.5	-17.2	-	+
Arthur	500	513	-4.1	-7.6	-6.7	-12.3	-23.8	-21.1	+	+
Banner	1,000	918	13.5	7.8	23.5	13.3	-20.9	-30.6	+	+
Blaine	700	867	-17.6	-21.1	-27.6	-32.6	-3.0	-29.4	-	-
Boone	7,100	7,391	-4.5	-7.6	-7.4	-12.3	-13.4	-17.9	+	+
Box Butte	14,600	13,696	6.6	-1.2	11.2	-2.0	21.0	-23.3	-	+
Boyd	3,100	3,331	-6.6	-6.5	-10.8	-10.6	-12.2	-25.6	+	+
Brown	4,100	4,377	-7.0	-8.2	-11.4	-13.3	5.4	-14.1	-	+
Buffalo	36,800	34,797	5.7	0.2	9.7	0.3	2.9	8.1	-	-
Burt	8,400	8,813	-5.0	-4.6	-8.2	-7.5	-4.2	-12.8	-	+
Butler	9,100	9,330	-2.2	-4.2	-3.6	-6.9	-2.2	-12.8	-	+
Cass	21,900	20,297	7.8	2.5	13.3	4.2	4.4	-8.5	-	+
Cedar	10,900	11,375	-3.9	-8.2	-6.4	-13.3	-11.8	-21.3	-	+
Chase	4,600	4,758	-2.4	-5.8	-4.0	-9.5	9.2	-9.0	-	-
Cherry	6,800	6,758	0.8	-3.8	1.3	-6.3	-8.0	-32.1	+	+
Cheyenne	10,100	10,057	0.7	-2.6	1.2	-4.3	-11.3	-50.4	+	+
Clay	7,600	8,106	-5.8	-8.0	-9.5	-13.0	-5.5	-8.1	-	-
Colfax	9,500	9,890	-3.6	-5.6	-5.9	-9.2	2.7	-4.0	-	-
Cuming	11,100	11,664	-4.8	-7.9	-7.9	-12.8	-7.2	-11.8	-	-
Custer	13,100	13,877	-5.7	-6.4	-9.3	-10.4	-3.3	-20.8	-	+
Dakota	17,300	16,573	4.2	-2.8	7.1	-4.6	10.2	-6.3	-	+
Dawes	9,300	9,609	-3.4	-6.3	-5.6	-10.3	-6.0	-3.6	-	-
Dawson	21,000	22,304	-5.8	-9.6	-9.5	-15.5	5.1	-6.6	-	-
Deuel	2,400	2,462	-4.3	-4.3	-7.1	-7.1	-9.7	-18.9	+	+
Dixon	6,700	7,137	-5.9	-8.0	-9.6	-13.0	-6.7	-12.9	-	-
Dodge	35,200	35,847	-1.8	-4.6	-3.0	-7.5	-2.2	-3.2	-	-
Douglas	414,900	397,038	4.5	-1.3	7.6	-2.2	-6.9	-2.1	+	-
Dundy	2,800	2,861	-2.5	-2.6	-4.1	-4.3	-1.5	-23.7	-	+
Fillmore	7,400	7,920	-6.7	-6.2	-10.9	-10.1	-0.8	-17.6	-	+
Franklin	4,100	4,377	-7.4	-5.1	-12.0	-8.4	0.8	-17.5	-	+
Frontier	3,500	3,647	-4.9	-8.4	-8.0	-13.6	-12.4	-12.1	-	-
Furnas	6,200	6,486	-5.0	-3.2	-8.2	-5.3	-2.3	-11.5	-	+
Gage	23,500	24,456	-4.0	-5.1	-6.6	-8.4	-5.6	-7.7	-	-
Garden	2,800	2,802	-0.5	-0.5	-0.8	-0.8	-3.2	-22.4	+	+
Garfield	2,200	2,363	-7.2	-6.5	-11.7	-10.6	-0.3	-16.8	-	+
Gosper	2,100	2,140	-1.0	-2.1	-1.7	-3.5	-6.5	-17.9	+	+
Grant	900	877	-0.8	-7.5	-1.3	-12.2	-25.8	-11.9	+	-
Greeley	3,300	3,462	-4.8	-6.6	-7.9	-10.8	-16.8	-20.4	+	+
Hall	48,900	47,690	2.5	-2.6	4.2	-4.3	3.3	7.5	-	-
Hamilton	9,100	9,301	-2.2	-6.9	-3.6	-11.2	0.8	-3.2	-	-
Harlan	4,100	4,292	-4.8	-6.8	-7.9	-11.1	1.6	-18.5	-	+
Hayes	1,400	1,356	-0.3	-5.5	-0.5	-9.0	-19.5	-31.2	+	+
Hitchcock	3,900	4,079	-4.3	-7.4	-7.1	-12.0	-2.0	-22.7	-	+
Holt	13,500	13,552	-0.4	-5.8	-0.7	-9.5	-1.2	-15.9	-	+
Hooker	1,000	990	-3.9	-3.2	-6.4	-5.3	5.8	-25.4	-	+
Howard	6,500	6,773	-4.7	-6.3	-7.7	-10.3	-4.2	-2.7	-	-
Jefferson	9,300	9,817	-4.8	-5.5	-7.9	-9.0	-4.7	-11.5	-	+
Johnson	4,900	5,285	-6.9	-6.1	-11.2	-10.0	-7.8	-12.4	-	+
Kearney	6,700	7,053	-5.6	-9.2	-9.2	-14.9	1.9	-1.4	-	-
Keith	8,900	9,364	-4.8	-9.1	-7.9	-14.7	2.4	-5.9	-	-
Keya Paha	1,200	1,301	-7.0	-10.0	-11.4	-16.1	-11.1	-33.4	-	+
Kimball	4,800	4,882	-2.5	-7.6	-4.1	-12.3	-30.5	-51.4	+	+
Knox	10,900	11,457	-5.1	-6.0	-8.4	-9.8	-3.0	-19.3	-	+
Lancaster	206,100	192,884	6.8	1.1	11.6	1.8	5.7	-5.6	-	+
Lincoln	33,700	36,455	-7.4	-12.7	-12.0	-20.3	10.8	-5.4	-	-
Logan	900	983	-4.7	-10.1	-7.7	-16.3	-9.7	-16.1	-	-
Loup	800	859	-1.4	-4.0	-2.3	-6.6	-0.9	-34.1	-	+
McPherson	600	593	-3.5	-7.3	-5.8	-11.9	7.6	-0.9	-	-

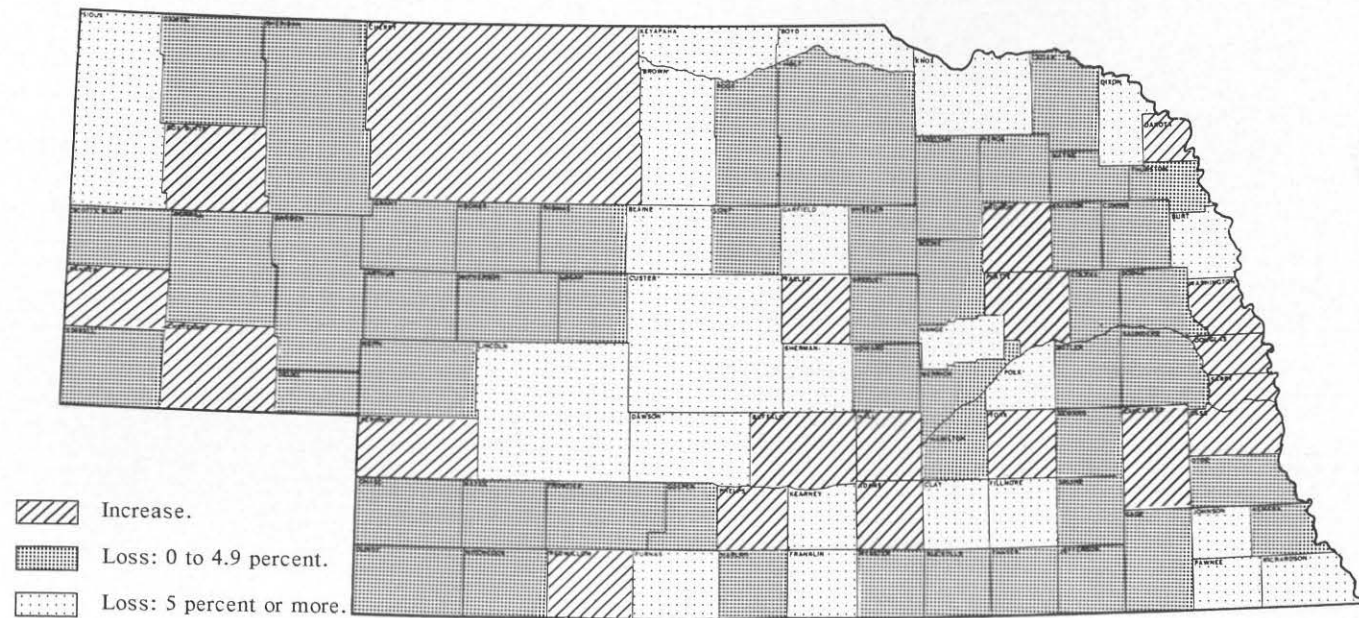
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Table 2 - continued  
Changes in Population and Net Migration Rates in Nebraska Counties, 1960-86

Area			Change in population 1980-86	Net migration rate 1980-86	Expected change 1980-1990		Net migration rate 1970-80	Net migration rate 1960-70	1980-86 migration rates compared to	
	Estimate July 1, 1986	Census April 1,1980			Population	Migration			1970-80	1960-70
	No.	No.			%	%			%	%
Madison	32,200	31,382	2.7	-2.6	4.5	-4.3	-11.5	-24.1	+	+
Merrick	8,600	8,945	-4.0	-6.4	-6.6	-10.4	-3.1	-2.9	-	-
Morrill	5,800	6,085	-4.2	-7.0	-6.9	-11.4	0.9	-28.9	-	+
Nance	4,500	4,740	-5.8	-5.8	-9.5	-9.5	-10.1	-13.9	+	+
Nemaha	8,300	8,367	-0.3	-1.8	-0.5	-3.0	-8.8	-3.2	+	+
Nuckolls	6,500	6,726	-2.9	-4.3	-4.8	-7.1	-9.9	-14.0	+	+
Otoe	14,700	15,183	-2.9	-3.7	-4.8	-6.1	-3.3	-10.4	-	+
Pawnee	3,700	3,937	-6.2	-3.7	-10.1	-6.1	-8.3	-16.1	+	+
Perkins	3,700	3,637	0.5	-2.1	0.8	-3.5	1.6	-28.3	-	+
Phelps	10,000	9,769	2.8	-0.6	4.7	-1.0	-0.3	-7.6	-	+
Pierce	8,400	8,481	-0.7	-5.1	-1.2	-8.4	-3.7	-9.5	-	+
Platte	29,500	28,852	2.1	-5.0	3.5	-8.2	-1.1	-3.4	-	-
Polk	6,000	6,320	-5.7	-6.2	-9.3	-10.1	-1.9	-14.5	-	+
Red Willow	12,800	12,615	1.3	-2.4	2.2	-4.0	-1.5	-16.2	-	+
Richardson	10,400	11,315	-8.1	-6.9	-13.1	-11.2	-4.7	-14.5	-	+
Rock	2,300	2,383	-4.6	-8.4	-7.5	-13.6	2.9	-22.7	-	+
Saline	13,000	13,131	-0.8	-2.4	-1.3	-4.0	3.3	1.7	-	-
Sarpy	95,600	86,015	11.2	0.7	19.4	1.2	9.0	36.3	-	-
Saunders	18,600	18,716	-0.4	-3.3	-0.7	-5.4	6.3	7.0	-	-
Scotts Bluff	37,900	38,344	-1.2	-5.8	-2.0	-9.5	-3.4	-4.7	-	-
Seward	15,700	15,789	-0.8	-4.3	-1.3	-7.1	4.3	1.1	-	-
Sheridan	7,300	7,544	-2.8	-6.2	-4.6	-10.1	-0.4	-31.1	-	+
Sherman	4,000	4,226	-5.4	-6.0	-8.8	-9.8	-13.4	-20.8	+	+
Sioux	1,700	1,845	-7.9	-10.7	-12.8	-17.2	-15.6	-32.2	-	+
Stanton	6,500	6,549	-1.3	-7.3	-2.2	-11.9	5.1	-7.4	-	-
Thayer	7,200	7,582	-4.4	-4.6	-7.2	-7.5	-0.6	-17.0	-	+
Thomas	900	973	-3.5	-10.0	-5.8	-16.1	-3.1	-17.3	-	+
Thurston	7,100	7,186	-0.8	-9.0	-1.3	-14.5	-3.3	-17.3	-	+
Valley	5,800	5,633	3.7	2.2	6.2	3.7	-2.4	-16.2	+	+
Washington	15,800	15,508	2.1	-1.0	3.5	-1.7	9.4	3.6	-	-
Wayne	9,600	9,858	-2.5	-6.7	-4.1	-10.9	-9.1	-3.2	-	-
Webster	4,700	4,858	-4.3	-1.4	-7.1	-2.3	-5.4	-13.8	+	+
Wheeler	1,000	1,060	-3.5	-12.1	-5.8	-19.3	-6.9	-36.2	-	+
York	14,900	14,798	0.4	-4.0	0.7	-6.6	3.4	-4.7	-	-

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1986 Population Estimates by County and Components of Change and Lynn Nejezchleb, Migration Trends and Patterns in Nebraska, Bureau of Business Research, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, June 1981. Calculations by CAUR.

Figure 1  
Population Change in Nebraska Counties,  
1980-86





metropolitan areas or contained a city with a population of 10,000 or more, while 2 contained communities with 2,500 or more residents.

While table 2 shows that Banner County on the western border of the state had the highest rate of growth, Sarpy County continued to be one of fastest growing counties. Other counties that showed substantial growth were Cass, 7.8 percent; Lancaster, 6.8 percent; Box Butte, 6.6 percent; and Buffalo, 5.7 percent. Douglas County had the largest increase in population in 1986 with 17,800 new residents. It was followed by Lancaster County, 13,200; Sarpy County, 9,600; and Buffalo County, 2,000.

Blaine County had the greatest percentage loss of population during the period, with a 17.6 percent decline. While Lincoln County experienced the most rapid growth during the 1970s, it suffered a 7.4 percent decline in population during 1980-86. Its loss of 2,700 persons accounted for the largest decline in total number of residents in the state. Other large percentage decreases in population were found in Garfield County, -2.8 percent; Franklin County, -7.4 percent; Sioux County, -7.9 percent; and Richardson County, -8.1 percent.

#### Net Migration

Table 2 also shows the net migration rates for Nebraska counties. Between 1980 and 1986, only 6 of the state's 93 counties reported net

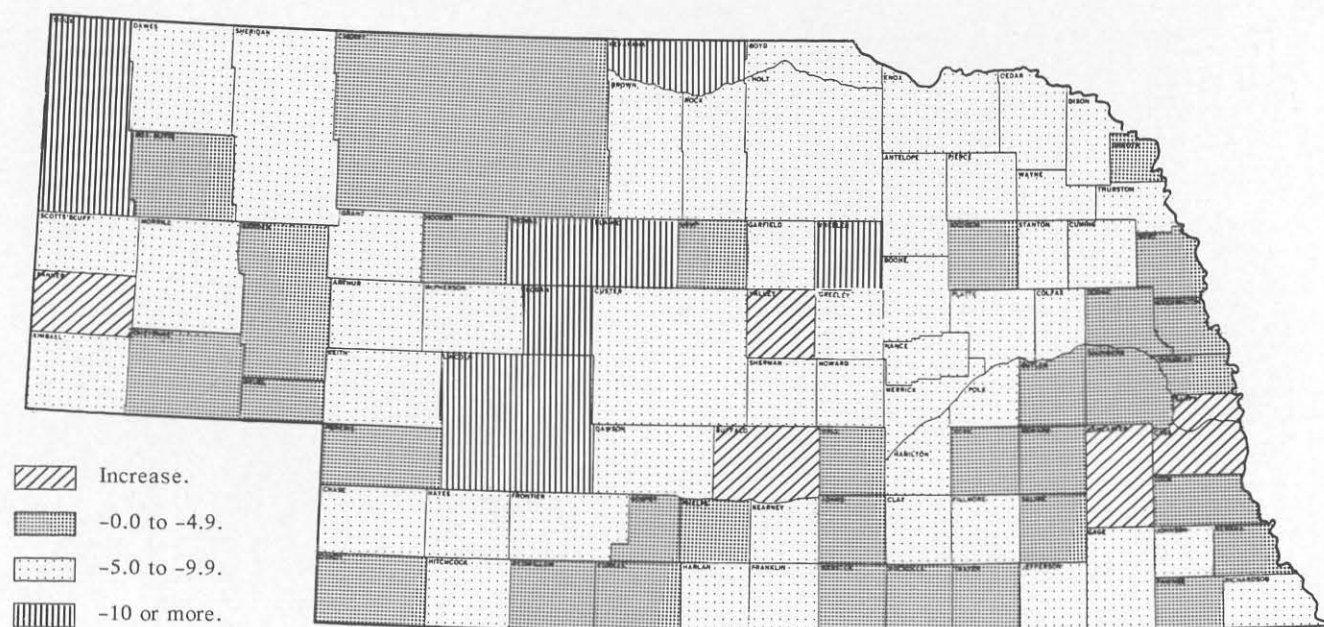
immigration. This was considerably less than the 28 counties that recorded net immigration during the 1970s. Compared to the 1970s, 24 counties reversed from net immigration to net outmigration, and 2 went from net outmigration to net immigration. As shown in figure 2, the six counties with net immigration were Banner, 7.8 percent; Cass, 2.5 percent; Valley, 2.2 percent; Lancaster, 1.1 percent; Sarpy, 0.7 percent; and Buffalo, 0.2 percent.

Seven counties recorded outmigration rates of 10 percent or more. With the exception of Lincoln County, these counties were among the state's smallest, and most were located in the Sandhills Region. Lincoln County had the most dramatic reversal in migration rates. It had the highest immigration rate during the 1970s, as a result of power plant construction and growth in the transportation industry.

For an historical perspective of current conditions, tables 1 and 2 also present projected net migration rates for the decade 1980-90, based on an extrapolation of 1980-86 rates. If this 6-year outmigration rate continues throughout the decade, the total outmigration rate for the state will be 4.8 percent during the 1980s.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the conditions of the early 1980s will continue indefinitely, just as it was a mistake to assume that the growth conditions of the 1970s would continue. Regardless, it is clear

Figure 2  
Net Migration Rates in Nebraska Counties,  
1980-86



that there has been a reversal in population and migration trends, the duration and extent of which is problematic.

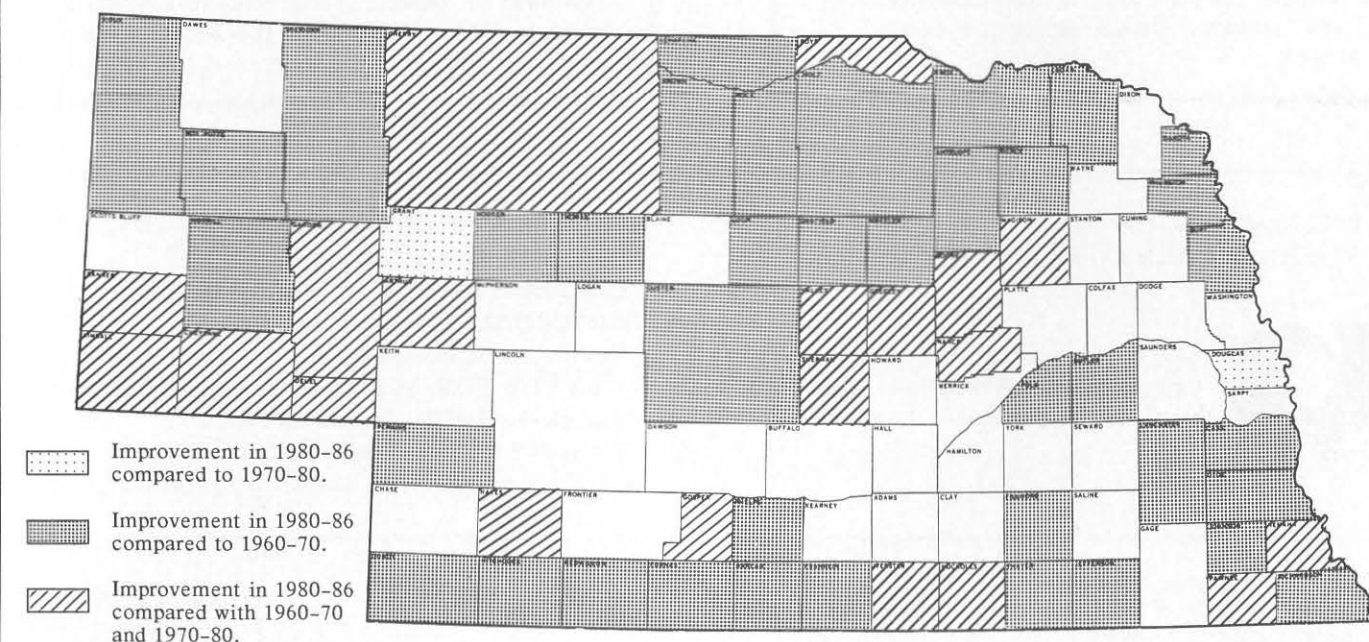
Compared with previous decades, the 1970s marked the period of lowest outmigration (table 1). The increase in net outmigration during the 1980s brings the population rate back to the levels of the 1960s. As table 1 shows, although net migration rates are similar, the rate of population growth in the 1980s will be less than in the 1960s.

Although the main reason for the difference in population is fewer births, the two decades are different in other ways. The age composition of the population has changed, with more older persons and fewer young persons in the 1980s. As a result, the composition of the outmigrants may have changed, because counties are now losing families and young, single adults. Moreover, after decades of

outmigration, some communities cannot support continued outmigration without losing their economic viability.

Table 2 presents a more detailed look at the transition from 1960 to 1986. The 1980 net migration rates are compared with 1970 and 1960. A "+" indicates improvement (improvement is defined as an increase in net immigration, a reversal from outmigration to immigration, or a decrease in net outmigration). By comparing the projected net migration rates during the 1980s to the actual rates of the 1970s, we see that 22 counties showed improvement. During the 1960s, 59 counties (more than 60 percent) improved. Figure 3 shows the counties where improvement occurred. The counties that improved between 1970 and 1980 also improved between 1960 and 1970, except for Douglas and Grant Counties.

Figure 3  
Change in Net Migration Rates of Nebraska Counties: 1980-86  
Compared with 1960-70 and 1970-80



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